



BREATH OF STILLNESS

The Qur'anic Method of Sakīnah Descent

A Qur'ān-Only Manual from Bayt al-Samā'

Bayt al-Samā' — Qur'anic practices for all people, in all places.

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The Nature of Sakīnah in the Qur'ān

What the Qur'ān Names and What It Does Not

The word sakīnah appears in the Qur'ān six times. Each occurrence carries a structural weight that extends beyond its immediate context. The root s-k-n belongs to a family of meanings that include settledness, residence, quietude, and the cessation of disturbance. The Qur'ān does not define sakīnah abstractly. It describes it in terms of its movement, its origin, its direction, and its effect upon the one who receives it. To read these six occurrences carefully, without adding to them, is to encounter a complete structural account of an interior condition that the Qur'ān treats as both real and receivable.

In Surat al-Baqarah, the Qur'ān describes the Ark of the Covenant as carrying sakīnah from the Lord. The sakīnah is not produced by the people. It is carried toward them. Its origin is stated: it comes from the Lord. Its vehicle is specified: it descends in a container. This structural pattern — origin above, vehicle of transmission, reception below — is the foundational grammar of every subsequent Qur'ānic reference to stillness.

“Fīhi sakīnatun min Rabbikum”

In it is sakīnah from your Lord — Al-Baqarah 2:248

The second and third appearances of sakīnah occur in Surat al-Tawbah. The first describes a moment when two people are in a cave, and the Qur'ān states that God sent down His sakīnah upon the Prophet. The language is precise: God is the agent, the sakīnah is sent down — anzala, from the root meaning to descend, to come down from an elevated position — and it lands upon a specific person in a specific condition of difficulty. The second occurrence in the same surah describes sakīnah being sent down upon the believers during a moment of collective distress. The pattern is identical: God sends, the sakīnah descends, the human being receives. The direction is always the same. The sakīnah does not rise from within the human being. It is not generated by human effort. It descends.

“Fa-anzala Allāhu sakīnatahū 'alayhi”

So God sent down His sakīnah upon him — Al-Tawbah 9:40

This distinction is architecturally important. The Qur'ān does not present sakīnah as something a human being produces, manufactures, or achieves through exertion. It is something that is sent. The human role is not one of creation but of reception. The chest that receives it must be in a condition that allows settlement. The Qur'ānic method, therefore, is not a method of producing stillness from below. It is a method of opening the receiving site so that what descends from above may settle without obstruction.

The fourth occurrence is in Surat al-Fath, which describes sakīnah being sent down into the hearts of the believers so that they might increase in certainty upon their certainty. The phrase is layered: the sakīnah descends into the heart; and when it settles there, certainty increases. This is a description of a sequential process. Sakīnah enters the heart; the heart's existing orientation toward truth deepens as a result. The stillness does not merely calm. It clarifies and consolidates. The fifth and sixth occurrences, also in Surat al-Fath, extend this account further: sakīnah is sent into the hearts of the believers during moments of collective difficulty, and God's armies — unnamed and unseen — are described as accompanying it. The sakīnah does not arrive alone. It arrives in the presence of unseen support.

“Li-yazdādū īmānan ma’a īmānihim”

That they might increase in certainty upon their certainty — Al-Fath 48:4

What emerges from these six occurrences, read structurally and without addition, is the following: sakīnah is a real condition, not a metaphor. It has an origin above the human being. It moves downward. It lands in the heart. When it settles, it produces deepened certainty and quieted disturbance. It is given in moments of difficulty, not in moments of ease. And it does not depend on the preparation of the one who receives it, except in the sense that the receiving site — the chest, the heart — must be open to receive what descends. The Qur’ānic method of sakīnah is, in its essence, the method of opening the receiving site.

It is necessary to be clear about what the Qur’ān does not say about sakīnah. It does not say that sakīnah is produced through breathing techniques. It does not say that the chest is mechanically altered by breath. It does not prescribe a practice in the procedural sense. What it does is describe, with architectural precision, the structure of the inner human being, the direction and nature of the stillness that is available, and the conditions in which it has been observed to descend. The method derived from these descriptions is not an addition to the Qur’ān. It is the Qur’ānic description itself, applied with attention to the body that is already described therein.

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The Human Inner Architecture

Nafs, Qalb, Fu'ād, Ṣadr, Lubḥ — As the Qur'ān Presents Them

The Qur'ān does not present the human interior as a unified, undifferentiated space. It names specific interior sites and assigns specific functions, conditions, and vulnerabilities to each. These sites are not theoretical constructs. The Qur'ān treats them as real locations within the human being, each capable of specific states: openness or closure, softness or hardness, clarity or obscurity. To understand sakīnah and its movement, it is necessary to understand these sites as the Qur'ān presents them — not as they have been elaborated by later traditions, but as they appear in the text itself.

The Nafs

The nafs in the Qur'ān is the self in its totality, the experiencing subject. The Qur'ān uses nafs in multiple registers. It is the site of inclination: “The nafs is inclined toward excess” (12:53). It is the site of accountability: “Every nafs shall taste death” (3:185). And it is the site of potential quietude: “O nafs that is at rest” (89:27). The nafs is not described as inherently disordered or inherently peaceful. Its condition varies. The Qur'ān describes three registers of the nafs: the commanding nafs (ammārah), the self-reproaching nafs (lawwāmah), and the nafs at rest (muṭam'innah). The third register is not a separate entity but a condition — a condition that the Qur'ān associates with being called back to the Lord, being pleased and well-pleased. The nafs at rest is the nafs in a state of sakīnah.

“Yā ayyatuhā al-nafs al-muṭam'innah”

O nafs that is at rest — Al-Fajr 89:27

The Qalb

The qalb is the heart, and the Qur'ān describes it as the primary site of understanding, perception, and receptivity. It is where sakīnah lands: in Surat al-Faḥ, the sakīnah descends “into their hearts” (fī qulūbihim). The qalb can be sealed (16:108), can turn aside (61:5), can be hardened (2:74), or can be made soft and receptive. It is described as seeing (22:46), as attending (50:37), and as being the site where God's guidance settles. The qalb is the primary receptive organ for what descends from above. Its condition — whether open or closed, soft or sealed — determines whether the descending sakīnah can settle within it or is deflected.

“Fa-innāhu āthimun qalbuḥu” • “Qulubun ta'qilūna bihā”

Hearts with which they reason — Al-Hajj 22:46

The Fu'ād

The fu'ād appears in the Qur'ān as a more interior organ than the qalb — or rather, as the qalb in its most attentive, receptive state. The Qur'ān says that God made the heart of the Prophet's mother empty (fārighā) so that she might attend. Emptiness of the fu'ād is presented as the condition of true attention. The fu'ād is also described as being questioned on the Day of Standing: “The hearing and the sight and the fu'ād — each of these will be questioned” (17:36). The fu'ād is thus accountable, attentive, and capable of being emptied for reception. When it is clear and empty, it is in the condition that allows the deepest settlement of sakīnah.

“Wa af'idatahum lā taqnā” — “Inn al-sam'a wa-l-baṣara wa-l-fu'āda”

The hearing, sight, and fu'ād will each be questioned — Al-Isrā' 17:36

The Ṣadr

The Ṣadr — the chest, the breast — is one of the most structurally significant locations in the Qur'ānic account of the inner human being. The Qur'ān describes the Ṣadr as capable of being expanded (sharh) or constricted. “Did We not expand your chest?” (94:1) is a direct reference to a physical and interior widening. The Ṣadr is also described as the site of what is hidden: “God knows what the Ṣudur contain” (3:119). It can be constricted and narrow (6:125), making it impossible for anything to descend into it. Or it can be opened and widened, making it a clear passage for what descends from above into the qalb. The Ṣadr functions architecturally as the outer chamber — the first site of reception, the space that either permits or obstructs the descent of sakīnah into the deeper heart.

“Alam nashrah laka Ṣadrak”

Did We not expand your chest — Al-Sharh 94:1

The Lubb

The lubb (plural albāb) is the innermost core, the kernel of the inner being. The Qur'ān consistently associates the albāb with those who are capable of the deepest perception: “Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth there are signs for those of understanding (ulī al-albāb)” (3:190). The lubb is not easily disturbed. It is the seat of steady, grounded comprehension. When sakīnah has passed through the Ṣadr, settled in the qalb, and cleared the fu'ād, it reaches and activates the lubb — the place of deep, unwavering clarity. The lubb does not fluctuate. It is the terminus of the descent, the deepest point at which stillness settles and becomes permanent orientation.

“Innā fī khalqī al-samāwāti wa-l-arḍi la-āyātīn li-ulī al-albāb”

Signs for those of deep understanding — Āl 'Imrān 3:190

These five interior sites form a vertical architecture. The Şadr is the outer chamber, opened or constricted. The qalb is the primary receptive heart, soft or sealed. The fu'ād is the attending, questioning inner faculty, empty or occupied. The lubb is the steady, understanding core, active or dormant. The nafs is the totality of the experiencing self, in one of its three registers. The descent of sakīnah passes through each of these sites in sequence. The Şadr must be open for the descent to enter. The qalb must be soft for the descent to settle. The fu'ād must be attending for the descent to be received. The lubb must be steady for the settlement to become permanent. The nafs, in its totality, rests when all these inner sites are in their proper condition.

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The Descent Pattern

How the Qur'ān Describes the Movement of Stillness

The Qur'ān uses the verb *anzala* and its derivatives with great consistency and precision. The verb means to cause to descend, to send down from above. It is used for revelation: the Qur'ān was sent down. It is used for rain: water is sent down from the sky. It is used for *sakīnah*: stillness is sent down into the heart. The repetition of this verb across these three domains is not incidental. The Qur'ān is presenting a consistent structural principle: that which is most essential to the human being arrives from above, descends into the receptive container below, and transforms what it enters.

“Huwa alladhī anzala al-sakīnata fī qulūbihim”

He is the One who sent down sakīnah into their hearts — Al-Fath 48:4

The rain pattern is instructive. The Qur'ān describes water descending from the sky into dead earth, and the earth coming alive as a result: “And We send down from the sky water that is blessed” (50:9). The earth does not generate the water. The water comes to it. The earth's role is to receive. Land that is hardened, compacted, or paved over cannot receive the rain. Land that is soft, open, and porous receives it fully. The *sakīnah* operates by the same structural logic. The heart that is hardened — the Qur'ān uses the word *qaswa*, hardness, for this condition — cannot receive what descends into it. The heart that is soft, open, and receptive allows the *sakīnah* to settle within it without obstruction.

“Wa-nazzalnā mina al-samā’i mā’an mubārakan”

And We send down from the sky blessed water — Qāf 50:9

The second structural element of the descent pattern is the relationship between remembrance (*dhikr*) and the settling of the heart. The Qur'ān states: “Verily, in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest” (13:28). The Arabic word used is *taṭma’inn* — from the same root as *muṭam’innah*, the *nafs* at rest. Remembrance does not produce *sakīnah* by mechanical causation. The Qur'ān does not say that *dhikr* manufactures stillness. It says that in *dhikr*, hearts find rest. The remembrance is the condition or the environment within which the descent of stillness occurs. The heart turned toward God in remembrance is a heart oriented upward, in the direction from which the *sakīnah* descends.

“Alā bi-dhikri Allāhi taṭma’inn al-qulūb”

Verily, in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest — Al-Ra’d 13:28

The third element of the descent pattern is the relationship between expansion of the chest (Ṣadr) and receptivity to what descends from above. The Qur’ān describes those whose chests God has expanded for surrender as being upon a light from their Lord (39:22). The expanded chest is described as an opening, a widening, a making-spacious of the site through which the sakīnah must pass on its way to the heart. The constricted chest, by contrast, is described as narrow, tight, as though the person were ascending into the sky — an experience of pressure and diminishing space. These are not metaphors in the Qur’ānic account. They are descriptions of real interior states that have direct consequences for whether the descent of sakīnah can occur.

The descent pattern, therefore, has three structural elements: an upper origin (God, from above), a passage (the chest, which must be open), and a destination (the heart, which must be soft and receptive). The practice of sakīnah descent is the practice of attending to the passage and the destination — not to manufacture the sakīnah, but to ensure that when it descends, it encounters no obstruction. The breath, as the Qur’ān will be seen to address, is the primary instrument available to the human being for working with the condition of the Ṣadr.

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The Breath as a Qur'ānic Mechanism of Expansion

The Ṣadr, the Nafs, and the Breath That Widens

The Qur'ān does not present a detailed physiology of breath. What it presents, however, is a consistent account of the relationship between the inner condition of the Ṣadr and the state of the whole human being. The word Ṣadr means chest and breast in Arabic — the physical cavity of the body that contains the lungs and the heart. The Qur'ān uses this word with full awareness of its physical referent while simultaneously treating it as the name of an interior condition. Expansion of the Ṣadr and constriction of the Ṣadr are both conditions of the physical chest and conditions of the inner life simultaneously. The breath that moves through the physical chest is not separate from the spiritual opening or closing that the Qur'ān describes.

“A-fa-man sharaqa Allāhu Ṣadrahū li-l-islām”

One whose chest God has expanded for surrender — Al-Zumar 39:22

The verb sharaha — to expand, to open out, to make wide — is the verb the Qur'ān uses for the expansion of the chest. It is the same verb used in “Did We not expand your chest?” (94:1). The object of this verb is the Ṣadr. What expands is a physical space. What the expansion enables is a spiritual reception. The two cannot be separated in the Qur'ānic account. A chest that is physically constricted — shallow-breathing, tight, held — is simultaneously a chest that is not in the condition for reception. A chest that is open, slow, and deep is simultaneously in the condition described as sharḥ al-Ṣadr: expansion of the breast.

The Qur'ān describes the opposite condition with equal precision. The constricted Ṣadr is described as Ṣayyiqān, narrow and tight, as though “climbing up into the sky” — a condition of diminishing air, increasing pressure, and the impossibility of full breath. This is the condition of the one who has turned away from God's remembrance: the Ṣadr closes. The physical and the interior are one. The breath becomes shallow. The chest tightens. The heart, which depends on the Ṣadr being open for its own receptivity, is denied the passage it needs.

“Wa-man a'raḍa 'anī dhikrī fa-inna lahū ma'tashatan ḍanākān”

Whoever turns away from My remembrance will have a constricted existence — Ṭā-Hā 20:124

The mechanism of the breath, within this Qur'ānic framework, is not a technique imposed from outside the natural order. The breath is the primary movement of the chest. To breathe slowly and fully is to engage the Ṣadr in its natural condition of expansion. The Qur'ān does not prescribe a breathing technique. But it describes, with structural clarity, what an expanded Ṣadr is and what a constricted Ṣadr is. The practice of

directing attention to the breath, allowing it to be slow and full rather than shallow and constricted, is the practice of working with the Ṣadr in the direction the Qur’ān identifies as receptive.

The word nafs itself in classical Arabic derives from the root that also gives the word for breath — nafas. The nafs is the breathing self, the self that exists as long as breath continues. The Qur’ān’s use of nafs, in all its registers, carries within it this reference to the breathing body. The nafs that is at rest — muṭam’innah — is not a nafs that has stopped breathing. It is a nafs whose breathing has become quiet, slow, and settled, matching the interior condition that the same word describes. The breath of the nafs at rest is itself at rest: not agitated, not shallow, not held.

“Wa-fī anfusikum aflā tubṣirūn”

And within yourselves — do you not perceive? — Al-Dhāriyāt 51:21

The Qur’ān directs attention inward: “And within yourselves — do you not perceive?” (51:21). The inner body, the breathing chest, the settling heart — these are the domain in which the Qur’ān’s structural account of sakīnah operates. The breath is the most immediately available instrument for working with this domain. It requires no external tool. It requires only attention — the same attention that the Qur’ān consistently identifies as the foundation of all inner work.

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The Chest as the Site of Tranquility

The Ṣadr in Its Opened and Constricted States

The Ṣadr occupies a structurally unique position in the Qur’ānic account of the inner human being. It is neither the deepest interior — that is the lubb — nor the surface of the body. It is the intermediate space, the outer chamber of the inner life, the region through which anything descending from above must first pass before reaching the heart. Its condition — open or closed, expanded or constricted — determines what can and cannot enter the deeper interior. The Qur’ān’s attention to the Ṣadr is therefore not incidental. It is architecturally central.

The Qur’ān uses the word Ṣadr more frequently than any other term for an interior location. It describes God as knowing what is in the Ṣudūr — the plural of Ṣadr — repeatedly across multiple surahs. The formula “Allāh ‘alīm bi-dhāt al-Ṣudūr” — God is knowing of what the chests contain — is one of the Qur’ān’s most repeated affirmations. What is held in the Ṣadr is real, known, and significant. It is not a passive container. It is an active domain with its own interior dynamics.

“Allāhu ‘alīmun bi-dhāti al-Ṣudūr”

God is knowing of what the chests contain — Āl ‘Imrān 3:119

The condition of expansion — sharḥ al-Ṣadr — is described by the Qur’ān as being caused by God, not by the human being alone. “Did We not expand your chest?” is a divine question to the Prophet, affirming that the expansion was an act of divine opening. “One whose chest God has expanded for surrender” (39:22) describes those for whom this opening has been given. And “Whoever God wishes to guide, He expands his chest for surrender; and whoever He wishes to lead astray, He makes his chest narrow and constricted” (6:125) presents the expansion of the Ṣadr as fundamentally a divine act, not a human achievement.

“Fa-man yurid Allāhu an yahdiahu yashrah Ṣadrahū li-l-islām”

Whomever God wishes to guide, He expands their chest for surrender — Al-An‘ām 6:125

This is not a contradiction of the practice. The Qur’ān’s account of guidance consistently involves a double movement: God acts, and the human being orients. The human being does not cause the chest to expand, just as the human being does not cause sakīnah to descend. What the human being can do is orient the chest — through breath, through attention, through dhikr — toward the condition of openness, and then receive what descends into that openness. The Ṣadr in the practice of sakīnah descent is worked with precisely because it is the intermediate site: the place where the human body and the divine descent meet.

The physical breath expands and contracts the Ṣadr with each cycle. On the inhalation, the chest opens, the lungs fill, the ribs widen. On the exhalation, the chest releases, the body softens, the weight of the physical structure settles downward. This physical movement is the bodily analogue of the structural opening and closing the Qur'ān describes. A deep, slow inhalation is the body moving into the condition of sharḥ al-Ṣadr. A full, releasing exhalation is the body returning to settledness, to the grounded quietude that is the precondition for sakīnah's settlement. The Qur'ān does not prescribe this. The Qur'ān describes the condition. The breath is the most natural, immediate, and direct way for the body to inhabit that condition.

The constriction of the Ṣadr — Ṣayyiq — is the condition of the chest when the inner life is closed, anxious, or turned away from remembrance. It is physically real. Those who have experienced acute anxiety know the sensation of the chest tightening, the breath becoming shallow, the whole cavity contracting. The Qur'ān names this condition and identifies its cause: turning away from dhikr. The correction is not effort but return. The return to remembrance, even in the briefest form, is the movement that allows the constriction to release and the Ṣadr to open again for what waits to descend.

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The Vertical Axis

Descent, Settlement, Openness in the Qur'ānic Account

The Qur'ān consistently organises the relationship between God and the human being along a vertical axis. God is described as being above, as sending down, as descending what is needed. The human being is described as below, as receiving, as being the site into which what is above descends. This is not a metaphor of power. It is a structural description of the relationship between source and receiver, between the origin of sakīnah and the site of its settlement. The vertical axis is the axis of the descent of everything essential: revelation, rain, sakīnah.

“Nazzala al-Qur'āna 'alā qalbika”

He sent down the Qur'ān upon your heart — Al-Baqarah 2:97

The Qur'ān was sent down upon the heart of the Prophet — 'alā qalbika. The revelation descended. The heart was the receiving site. The pattern is the same as that of sakīnah: the divine origin above, the descending movement, the heart as the landing place. The vertical axis is therefore not incidental to the Qur'ānic account. It is its primary structural orientation. The human being who receives sakīnah is oriented vertically: the chest open, the heart turned upward toward the source of what descends, the inner sites in the condition that allows settlement.

The Qur'ān also describes the human body in its relation to the earth. The human being was made from earth (30:20), returns to earth (20:55), and carries an orientation both downward — grounded, settled, still — and upward — receptive, attending, open to what descends. The sakīnah that descends does not pull the human being away from the ground. It settles. The word sakīnah, from the root s-k-n, means to be settled, to be resident, to stop moving. What descends from above settles into the grounded human being and produces a condition of settled presence, not elevation or flight. The human being becomes more rooted, not less, when sakīnah descends.

“Huwa alladhī ja'ala lakumu al-arḍa dhalūlān”

He is the One who made the earth tractable for you — Al-Mulk 67:15

The vertical axis has an upper end and a lower end. The upper end is the divine origin of sakīnah, the source of the descent. The lower end is the settled human being on the earth — grounded, still, present. Between these two ends, the passage passes through the inner architecture: through the open Ṣadr, into the soft qalb, through the attending fu'ād, into the steady lubb. The body in which this passage occurs is a body that is physically oriented toward stillness: neither rigid nor collapsed, neither tense nor absent, but present,

open, and grounded. The breath, moving slowly and fully through the open chest, is the physical expression of this orientation.

The Qur'ān presents the stars, the mountains, the trees, and the water all as participants in a universal orientation toward God, each in its own mode of submission. The human being's mode includes the interior life, the chest, the heart, and the breath. The vertical axis of sakīnah descent is not a private spiritual experience disconnected from the wider order. It is the human being's participation in the same universal structure of descent and settlement that the Qur'ān describes across all of creation.

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The Method of Breath of Stillness

A Detailed Qur'ānic Practice

The method described here is derived entirely from the Qur'ānic descriptions of sakīnah, the Ṣadr, the qalb, dhikr, and the conditions of reception. It does not import external techniques. It applies the Qur'ānic structural account to the body that the Qur'ān itself describes. The practice has three phases, corresponding to the three structural elements of the descent pattern: opening the passage, orienting the receiving site, and resting in the condition of reception. Each phase corresponds to a clear Qur'ānic description.

Phase One: Opening the Ṣadr

The first phase addresses the Ṣadr directly. The body is placed in a settled position — seated or lying, with the spine lengthened but not strained. The attention is brought to the physical chest. The first movement is a slow, full inhalation through the nose, allowing the breath to widen the chest outward and upward. This is the physical analogue of sharḥ al-Ṣadr: the widening, the opening of the outer chamber. The Qur'ān asks: “Did We not expand your chest?” The practice begins by attending to this expansion as a real, present, physical event.

“Alam nashrah laka Ṣadrak”

Did We not expand your chest — Al-Sharḥ 94:1

The exhalation is slow, released without force, allowing the chest to return to its natural resting position without collapsing. The quality of the exhalation is settledness: the chest does not tighten after the breath leaves, it rests. This cycle is repeated three times, with full attention given to the physical sensation of the chest opening and returning. By the third cycle, the Ṣadr has moved from whatever contracted state it was in toward the condition the Qur'ān describes as open and expanded.

Phase Two: Orienting the Qalb Through Dhikr

With the Ṣadr open, the second phase turns the inner attention toward the qalb. The Qur'ān states that in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest. Dhikr is not a technique for producing sakīnah. It is the orientation of the heart toward the source from which sakīnah descends. In this phase, a short Qur'ānic phrase is held in the attention — not chanted, not repeated mechanically, but simply present in the interior awareness. The phrase “Allāh” — the Name itself, which the Qur'ān uses as the primary Name of the divine origin of sakīnah — is sufficient. Or the phrase from Surat al-Ra'd: “Verily, in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest.”

“Alā bi-dhikri Allāhi taṭma’inn al-qulūb”

Verily, in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest — Al-Ra’d 13:28

The attention rests on this phrase during the exhalation phase of each breath cycle. The inhalation opens the Ṣadr. The exhalation carries the awareness of dhikr into the qalb. The heart is not forced into a state. It is oriented — turned, as one turns a face toward a source of warmth. The Qur’ān uses the verb tawajjaha — to turn toward — for this kind of orientation. The qalb is turned toward the source of sakīnah through the quiet, repeated presence of dhikr during the exhalation.

Phase Three: Resting in Reception

The third phase requires no action. It is the phase of resting in the condition that Phases One and Two have prepared. The Ṣadr is open. The qalb is oriented toward God through dhikr. The breath continues, slow and full, without deliberate control. The attention rests in the chest and heart simultaneously — not grasping, not analyzing, not checking for results. The Qur’ān describes the nafs muṭam’innah as the nafs that has arrived at this condition of rest. The practice is not a method for producing the nafs muṭam’innah. It is a method for inhabiting the structural conditions that the Qur’ān associates with the arrival of sakīnah.

“Yā ayyatuhā al-nafs al-muṭam’innah, irji’i ilā Rabbiki rāḍiyatan marḍiyyah”

O nafs at rest — return to your Lord, pleased and well-pleased — Al-Fajr 89:27-28

The duration of Phase Three is not fixed. It may last five breaths or fifty. What matters is the quality of the resting — the absence of grasping and the presence of open attention. The sakīnah that descends in this condition is not experienced as a dramatic event. The Qur’ān describes it as settling — the same verb used for water settling in still ground, for a bird coming to rest on a branch, for a resident arriving home. The descent of sakīnah is a settling. It is quiet, unmistakable, and produces in the qalb the deepening of certainty that Surat al-Faṭḥ describes.

The three phases may be practised together in a single session of ten to fifteen minutes. They may also be used individually. Phase One alone — three slow breaths with attention on the expansion of the Ṣadr — is a complete intervention for a constricted chest in any moment of difficulty. Phase Two alone — the quiet presence of dhikr during exhalation — is a complete method of orienting the qalb in any moment of distraction. Phase Three alone — resting in open attention without action — is the condition the Qur’ān describes as the environment in which hearts find rest.

Bayt al-Samā’ — Qur’anic practices for all people, in all places.

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States Before and After Sakīnah

The Qur'ānic Account of Disturbance and Settledness

The Qur'ān does not romanticise the condition of the human being before sakīnah descends. It describes, with precision and without embellishment, the states that characterise the inner life when the Ṣadr is constricted, the qalb is sealed, and the nafs is in its commanding or self-reproaching registers. These states are real. They are described in the Qur'ān not to condemn the human being who experiences them, but to accurately name the condition from which sakīnah descent is a departure.

The state before sakīnah is characterised in the Qur'ān by several specific conditions. The first is qalaq — anxiety, restlessness, unease. The Qur'ān describes the human being as “created anxious” (70:19) — *halū'ā*, from a root meaning to be agitated, to be restless, to not settle. This is the natural condition of the nafs in its *ammārah* and *lawwāmah* registers: driven by inclination, reproaching itself, never settling. The Ṣadr in this state is narrow. The qalb in this state is turned toward the fluctuations of the inner world rather than toward the divine source of stillness.

“**Inn al-insāna khuliqa halūcān**”

The human being was created anxious — Al-Ma'ārij 70:19

The second condition before sakīnah is the sealed qalb. The Qur'ān describes the sealed heart as one that has a cover over it, a film, a weight — and therefore cannot receive what descends. The sealing is not permanent. The Qur'ān presents the sealed heart as a condition that has causes, not a fixed state. What seals the heart is, in the Qur'ānic account, persistence in what turns away from God's remembrance. What opens the heart is the return to remembrance and the return to the conditions of receptivity.

The state after sakīnah is described in Surat al-Faḥ with clarity: an increase of certainty upon certainty. The heart that has received sakīnah does not become uncertain. It becomes more certain. Its existing orientation toward truth deepens. The Qur'ān does not say that sakīnah produces happiness, pleasure, or elevated emotion. It says it produces *īmān* upon *īmān* — certainty upon certainty. The interior becomes quieter and more grounded, not more excited.

“**Wa-kāna Allāhu 'alīman ḥakīmān**” — “**Li-yazdādū īmānan ma'a īmānihim**”

That they might increase in certainty upon their certainty — Al-Faḥ 48:4

The Qur'ān also describes the state after sakīnah in terms of the nafs *muṭam'innah* being called back to the Lord in a condition of being pleased and well-pleased. The nafs at rest does not resist the return. It does

not grasp at the world. It is not in flight from difficulty. It has settled. And because it has settled, it is able to re-enter every context — work, relationship, challenge, loss — from the position of settledness rather than from the position of anxious reactivity. The practical consequence of sakīnah is not withdrawal from life. It is engaged, grounded, non-reactive presence within life.

The transition between these two states — before and after — is not instantaneous in ordinary experience, though the Qur’ān presents instances in which the descent of sakīnah occurs in a single moment of extreme difficulty. In regular practice, the transition is gradual. The Ṣadr opens slowly over repeated practice. The qalb softens incrementally. The fu’ād becomes progressively clearer. The lubb grows steadier. Each practice of the Breath of Stillness method is a small movement from the state of constriction toward the state of settled openness.

Bayt al-Samā’ — Qur’anic practices for all people, in all places.

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Daily Integration and Rhythms

Sakīnah Within the Structure the Qur’ān Describes

The Qur’ān structures time. It names specific moments of the day and night as times of particular significance for the inner life. The early morning — fajr — is one of the times named. The late afternoon — ‘aṣr — is another. The night — layl — is described as a time of particular depth and receptivity. These are not arbitrary divisions. The Qur’ān presents each of these times as having a quality that corresponds to specific inner states. The practice of sakīnah descent is integrated most naturally into the structure of time that the Qur’ān itself describes.

“Wa-l-fajri wa-layālin ‘aṣr”

By the dawn and the ten nights — Al-Fajr 89:1–2

The pre-dawn time is characterised in the Qur’ān as a time of particular clarity and receptivity. The Qur’ān praises those who seek forgiveness in the pre-dawn hours (3:17). The nafs is closest to the nafs muṭam’innah in the early morning, having rested through the night. The chest is relatively open. The accumulated constrictions of the waking day have not yet accumulated. This is the most natural time for the Breath of Stillness practice — not because the Qur’ān prescribes a breathing practice at dawn, but because the structural conditions the Qur’ān associates with receptivity are naturally present at this time.

The mid-day and afternoon hours are described in the Qur’ān as times of heat, activity, and dispersal. The Ṣadr tends to constrict over the course of active engagement with the world. This is not pathological. It is the natural movement of the chest as it participates in worldly activity. The Qur’ān does not describe worldly engagement as harmful to the inner life. What it consistently identifies as harmful is worldly engagement without remembrance — engagement that has turned away from dhikr and therefore from the conditions that allow sakīnah to descend.

“Rijālun lā tulhīhim tijāratun wa-lā bay’un ‘ani dhikri Allāh”

Those whom neither trade nor commerce diverts from the remembrance of God — Al-Nūr 24:37

The integration of sakīnah practice within the working day is therefore not a matter of setting aside large blocks of time. The Qur’ān describes people who are engaged in trade and commerce and who simultaneously maintain dhikr. The three phases of the Breath of Stillness method can be practised in any moment of pause: the beginning of a task, the space between meetings, the transition between locations. Phase One alone — three slow breaths with attention on the chest — takes less than two minutes. Phase Two — quiet dhikr during exhalation — can be practised during any moment of walking or waiting. These are not

interruptions to life. They are the integration of the receptive condition into the fabric of the day.

The night — layl — is described by the Qur’ān as a time of particular depth and seriousness. The Qur’ān describes standing in the night as heavier in impression and more correct in speech (73:6). This is not a prescription for sleeplessness. It is an observation about the quality of attention available at night, when the sensory demands of the day have receded and the inner life has more space. A brief practice of the Breath of Stillness at the end of the day — Phase Three alone, resting in open attention for ten breaths — allows the Ṣadr to release the accumulated constrictions of the day and the nafs to approach the sleep state from the settled position of the nafs muṭam’innah rather than from anxious reactivity.

“Inn nāshi’ata al-layli hiya ashaddu waṭāan wa-aqwamu qīlān”

The night rising is more profound in impression and more correct in speech — Al-Muzzammil 73:6

The Qur’ān’ānic rhythm of the day is not a rhythm of spiritual isolation. It is a rhythm of continuous orientation, maintained through brief returns to remembrance within the flow of ordinary life. The Breath of Stillness practice is one form of this return. It is not the only form. Any genuine return to dhikr, in any form, within any moment of the day, is a movement toward the condition in which sakīnah descends. The method described in this book is a structural account of how that return operates through the body — specifically through the Ṣadr and the qalb — as the Qur’ān describes them.

Bayt al-Samā’ — Qur’anic practices for all people, in all places.

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Appendix: Qur'ānic Anchors Used

All Passages Referenced in This Book

Al-Baqarah 2:97 — He sent down the Qur'ān upon your heart

Al-Baqarah 2:248 — In it is sakīnah from your Lord

Āl 'Imrān 3:17 — Those who seek forgiveness in the pre-dawn hours

Āl 'Imrān 3:119 — God is knowing of what the chests contain

Āl 'Imrān 3:185 — Every nafs shall taste death

Āl 'Imrān 3:190 — Signs for those of deep understanding (ulī al-albāb)

Al-An'ām 6:125 — Whomever God wishes to guide, He expands their chest for surrender

Al-Tawbah 9:40 — So God sent down His sakīnah upon him

Al-Tawbah 9:26 — Then God sent down His sakīnah upon His Messenger and upon the believers

Yūnus 10:57 — A healing for what is in the chests

Hūd 11:6 — And within yourselves — do you not perceive?

Al-Ra'd 13:28 — Verily, in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest

Al-Isrā' 17:36 — The hearing, the sight, and the fu'ād will each be questioned

Ṭā-Hā 20:55 — From it We created you and into it We return you

Ṭā-Hā 20:124 — Whoever turns away from My remembrance will have a constricted existence

Al-Ḥajj 22:46 — Hearts with which they reason

Al-Nūr 24:37 — Those whom neither trade nor commerce diverts from the remembrance of God

Al-Rūm 30:20 — Among His signs is that He created you from earth

Al-Zumar 39:22 — One whose chest God has expanded for surrender

Al-Dhāriyāt 51:21 — And within yourselves — do you not perceive?

Qāf 50:9 — And We send down from the sky blessed water

Al-Fath 48:4 — He is the One who sent down sakīnah into their hearts, that they might increase in certainty upon their certainty

Al-Fath 48:18 — God sent down His sakīnah upon them

Al-Fath 48:26 — God sent down His sakīnah upon His Messenger and upon the believers

Al-Muzzammil 73:6 — The night rising is more profound in impression

Al-Mulk 67:15 — He is the One who made the earth tractable for you

Al-Ma'ārij 70:19 — The human being was created anxious

Al-Muzzammil 73:8 — Remember the Name of your Lord

Al-Sharh 94:1 — Did We not expand your chest?

Al-Fajr 89:1-2 — By the dawn and the ten nights

Al-Fajr 89:27-28 — O nafs at rest — return to your Lord, pleased and well-pleased

Bayt al-Samā' — Qur'anic practices for all people, in all places.

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